

The ChildThrive! Times



VOL. I ISSUE I

SERVING THE RESIDENTS OF BRENT PLACE, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

DECEMBER 2010

Dear Neighbors,

Welcome to the first issue of AmeriCorps' ChildThrive! Times newsletter! We would like to take this time to introduce ourselves to the residents, so please take a few moments to glance through our pages to get familiar with us and our purpose at Brent Place. The Ameri-Corps members are excited to work with the

families and staff of Brent Place to develop programs and bring in services that will directly assist the residents in their needs. Our primary goal is to serve the residents of Brent Place so please feel free to pull any of us aside and let us know how we can improve this community. We need to hear from you! With your help, we look forward to working together to make Brent Place a better place!

What Is AmeriCorps?

AmeriCorps is a U.S. federal government program that was created under President Bill Clinton by the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 as a way for Americans to give back to their communities and their country.

The organization was founded to encourage citizens to strengthen their communities through acts of service. Today, thousands of AmeriCorps volunteers contribute to a culture of compassion by tackling the nation's toughest problems, working to make our communities safer and healthier, and improving the lives of tens of millions of children, families, and adults in need.

AmeriCorps members work in a variety of areas including education, public safety, health, and the environment through direct service and capacity-building projects. Since its beginning, AmeriCorps members have provided more than 637 million hours of service.

For more information on AmeriCorps, visit www.americorps.gov.

What Is ChildThrive!?

In the past, the Department of Community and Human Services' (DCHS) has provided Brent Place with parenting and tutoring groups, information and referral, educational workshops, and special events for the children. In an effort to expand these services and enhance the well-being of the families who live there, DCHS has now partnered with AmeriCorps to create ChildThrive! – a program to bring a variety of additional services to Brent Place residents.

"ChildThrive! seeks to benefit children by helping parents find employment, get domestic violence counseling, sign up for public assistance, if eligible, and study for citizenship," said Suzanne Chis, DCHS Deputy Director. "The program also helps children by offering additional educational support and recreational activities."

Services are provided by six AmeriCorps members, staff from DCHS programs including Child Welfare Services, JobLink, the School Age Prevention Program, and personnel from local non-profits.

AmeriCorps members are designing recreational activities for children, youth, and adults both onand off-site. They will help residents form a residents' council and also recruit support from local businesses and community organizations to provide other enrichment activities.

Since the ChildThrive! program began in September, the AmeriCorps members have assisted the School-Age Prevention Program with a children's Halloween party, partnered with JobLink to host a two-day job fair in Brent Place, and distributed to needy families free children's winter coats provided by the non-profit Coats for Kids.

The AmeriCorps members bring unique skills to ChildThrive!, are applying their talents to benefit the children and families of one of the area's most needy communities and are using their service as a means of giving back so that others may succeed. For more information on each member, see our article on page 2.

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ChildThrive! Mission Statement

ChildThrive! is dedicated to serving the over 200 families residing in Brent Place, a diverse, multi-ethnic high-rise located in Alexandria, Virginia. Our purpose is to create, develop, and implement empowerment programs and services that will directly impact the residents we serve. We will work closely with our community of residents, staff, and local organizations and leaders to assist families and youth in the areas of education, health, financial literacy, domestic violence, awareness, employment and job training, school support, and recreation. Our goal is to positively influence the community within Brent Place so that Brent Place can positively influence the community around it!



Did You Know?

Think Brent Place is pretty tall? Check out the Burj

Khalifa in Dubai. Opened earlier this year, the building has set two new world records for the tallest building at 160 stories and for the highest outdoor observation deck (located on the 124th floor)! Now imagine the ride to the top of that building!

Brent Place Gets 6 New AmeriCorps Members

By now, you've seen us walking around, in the Community Room, in the lobby, canvassing floors, and talking to residents. But who are we? Where did we come from? What are our backgrounds? What are our interests? Well, we thought we'd share a little about ourselves since some of you have shared so much of yourselves with us. You'll find that we are a very diverse bunch... a quality that will serve us well in serving you!

Semhar, a native of Eritrea in northeast Africa, came to the United



States at the age of four. She has recently received a dual B.A. degree in Government and International Politics, and Conflict Analysis and Resolution from George Mason University.

As a new member of AmeriCorps, she is very excited to work with the immigrant resident here at Brent Place. She loves music, poetry, and to travel. Her favorite quote is by Mahatma Gandhi, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."

Raymond hails from Washington, D.C. and has a strong passion for helping young boys and teenagers develop into young and grown men. He has played several sports, including football,

basketball, baseball and football on the collegiate level, earning All Conference accolades and several individual awards. In addition, Raymond



coaches high school football; teaching not just the fundamentals and basic principles of the sport but also connecting on a personal level with the individuals and coaches he works with.

His goal in life is to be an example of hope for young men from all backgrounds to persevere through all challenges they're faced with; even when they don't see a positive outcome. "Life is truly what we make of it, and giving up is the easiest thing a human can do." Calandra, born and raised in Richmond, Virginia, is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University, holding Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Applied Mathematics and Business Administration, respectively. With a passion for architecture and urban policy, she plans to design socially-conscious public housing and communities in metro areas across the U.S.



While her interests are wide and varied, her greatest joy comes from the visual and performing arts, anthropology and religion, travel, health living, and community service.

Marva, a native of Richmond, VA, is very excited to be working with the residents at Brent Place as a member of AmeriCorps. She earned her B.S. in Business Management from



George Mason University and plans to attend graduate school to pursue her Master of Public Health.

Her passion is to serve others in whatever capacity they need, with a strong focus on women and children in particular. Her personal interests are in music, the arts, reading and traveling. Samaria comes to AmeriCorps from Richmond, Virginia. She is a graduate of Tougaloo College with a B.S. in Biology. She has volunteered extensively with the Chesterfield County Virginia Center for Domestic Violence.

Her focus with Ameri-Corps will be in the area of Domestic Violence Awareness and organizing health relationship classes for the residents of Brent Place.



Dorey is a bilingual (Spanish) RN, MSN with a BA in Cultural Anthropology. She has a great deal of experience in public and community health, especially in teaching and empowering pregnant teens to become great teen moms with smart and healthy infants and children. She has volunteered in Guatemala and throughout Central America. She loves young people, has led a youth mission trip to the Dominican Republic, taught child and teen Sunday school and prayer, led youth groups and peace building camps for children, and tutors in a bi-lingual kids' club. She is a student at Wesley Theological Seminary in DC, and has had courses in Counseling Adults and Teens, Teaching Life Skills to At-Risk Youth, Martin Luther King and Gandhi, Theology of the Global

Poor, Children and Poverty. Dorey is especially interested in starting an Interfaith Youth Volunteer Corps at Brent Place.



Want to get in touch with us? Feel free to call us or leave a message at any one of our numbers listed below. Better yet, the best way to contact us is to just stop by! You can usually find us in the Community Room between the fitness center and the stairwell on the first floor. Door not open? Don't worry, just give us a knock and if we're there and available, we'll open right up!

Semhar 571-286-1855

Raymond 571-215-1196



Calandra 571-236-2011

Marva 571-242-0305



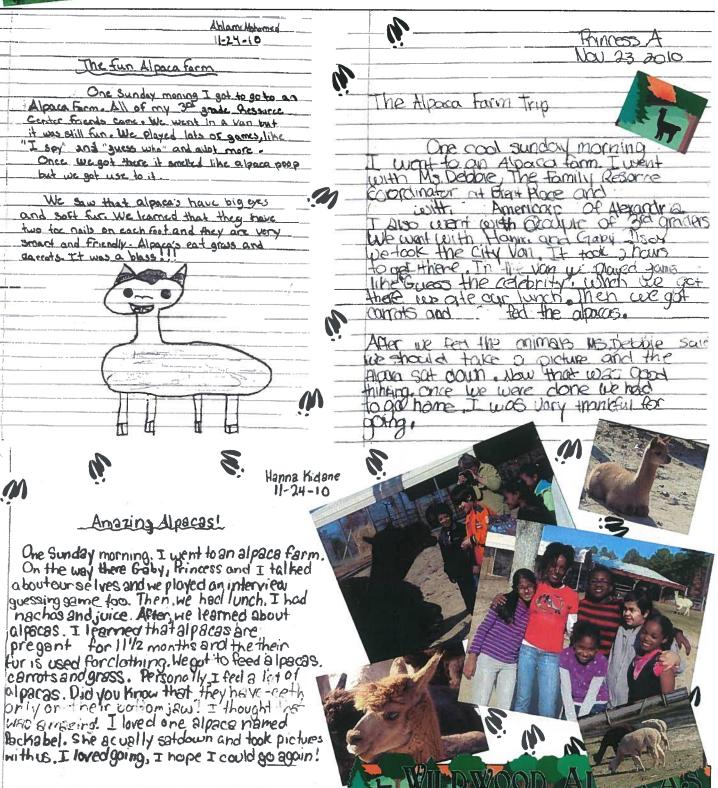
Samaria 571-286-1853

Dorey 571-216-5422

Brent Place Kids Visit Caroline County Alpaca Farm



On November 21st, the AmeriCorps staff and Ms. Debbie visited Wildwood Alpacas, a small breeding farm in Caroline County, just south of Fredericksburg. While we had an awesome time, we'd rather let the pictures and the letters from the kids tell of our wonderful day at the farm! For more info on alpacas, visit www.wildwoodalpacas.com, or just ask any one of the kids who were there! They can tell you *more* than enough about their experience!



WILDWOOD ALPACAS

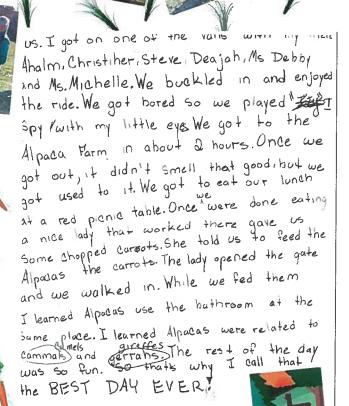
Chris 11-23-10

The AlPaca Trip

ON Sunday I got invited to an alpaca farm. The transportation was just a van, but it was awame! Some of my friends went like: Alyvia, Steven, Hanna, Ablam, And Ms. Debbie. AMerican corp staff brought all of us to the alpaca farm. The alpacas had lots of fur. Then we had a lunch break. When we where done with our food an alpaca chazed me and kissed me on the head alot of times. When we were done we learned a comple of facts about alpacas. Like alpacas can survive in hot and coid weather. They look like lamas. They Sheve their wool in the winter for sputs.



Ready my mom was packing met lunch. After I was done getting ready I grabed my bag and coat and headed out the door. Once I got down stairs in the lobby I went to Ms. Amalia's office. There were my friends and some other kids also Ms. Debby, Medimatra and some other Abults. Alady with short, white hair told us we will be going in about 20 minutes. While we were waiting to go, my friends and I played around a little. In about 20 minutes the lady with short, white hair came back and said twas time to go. We collected our belonging and walked outside. Two vans were waiting for



Developments Underway for Resident's Council

With a new management staff in place, it's time to begin organizing a new resident's council. If you'd like to be a part of the changes coming to Brent Place or want to voice your opinions or concerns, or ideas in an organized and effective forum, then you should be part of this council.

Our initial interest meeting will be held on Thursday, January 6th at 7pm at the AmeriCorps office in the Community Room on the first floor. Come prepared with ideas for changes you'd like to see happen with Brent Place but also solutions on how you,, the residents, can help bring on that change. We've already heard from a few residents so we know the ideas are there. Bring them to the table and join us on January 6th!

Artists Needed for Logo Contest



Are you the next Picasso? Could you put Van Gogh to shame? Do you have an artistic eye? Well, we need you! We are looking to redesign our ChildThrive! logo into something that best reflects the Brent Place community we serve. So what does this mean? We need you to draw, create, put together, or design a symbol, emblem, trademark, or logo for us to use on all of our ChildThrive! newsletters, flyers, our website, and everything else

we put out. The winning logo will be revealed in our next newsletter with a feature article on the artist! So, gear up those pencils, markers, crayons, or whatever your medium is and get to designing! Submit your logo designs to the AmeriCorps office no later than December 31st and you may just see it gracing our front page next month! All residents are invited to participate.

Have questions? Just ask any AmeriCorps member for more details! We can't wait to see what you come up with! Here's your chance to shine and show the world what you've got!

Past Events

November 2010

November was an active month for Ameri-Corps' ChildThrive! members! Here's a quick breakdown of our projects last month:

11/3-4: JobLink Job Fair at Brent Place 11/8-19: Brent Place Resident's Survey 11/21: Alpaca Farm Field Trip

If you didn't see us during any of these November events, be sure to look for us as we work on our upcoming projects for December. As always, feel free to give us feedback on a past event or an idea for something new down the road. Also, check out more on our field trip to the Alpaca farm in the special insert of this newsletter.

AmeriCorps Meet and Greet

Please come out this Friday, December 3rd from 4pm to 6pm and meet your AmeriCorps members! Light refreshments will be served in the Community Room. Drawings for the Brent Place survey raffle winners of a \$75 VISA gift card will be held during the meet and greet as well. Please come out and be a part of the excitement and fun for the entire family!

Brent Place Celebrates Martin Luther King Jr.

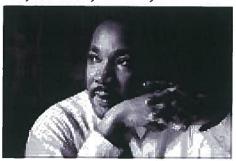
Youth Speakers, Writers, Artists, and Actors Needed

On Monday, January 17, 2011, we all will be honoring one of our nation's great pioneers, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. To commemorate the occasion, the members of AmeriCorps would like to organize an MLK Day celebration for the residents and staff of Brent Place on Friday, January 14th.

To help us, we need all students, grades K-12, to participate! We need writers, speakers, artists, actors, and singers to come out and help us put on a production that would make Dr. King himself proud! Dr. King had a dream and so does every child. We want every student to have the opportunity to express their dream and aspirations for their life.

press their dream and aspirations for their life, their family, their community, or the world around them.

We will begin recruiting kids for speech writers, choir members, skit actors, mural artists, and emcees starting Monday, December 6th. AmeriCorps members will be available to coordinate the



"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." – Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 1929-1968

kids on their various projects of interest everyday through December 17th from 3pm to 6pm. Just come to our office in the Community Room between the fitness center and the stairwell to learn how you can be a part of something huge at Brent Place!

Our MLK Day celebration is designed to highlight the great works of Dr. King. We will need everyone's help and support to make this very special event possible.

We will provide more information on the ceremony in the next newsletter. How-

ever, if you have questions about participating in any of the *projects* for the event, contact any AmeriCorps member between now and December 17th. All projects for the celebration must be completed by January 7th. We look forward to working with the children of Brent Place to commemorate MLK Day 2011!

KidzCorner!

Welcome to the KidzCorner! Here, we'll have games, puzzles, trivia... all things KIDS! If you have jokes, riddles, drawings or games you want to share, just let us know and you could see it in our next newsletter! This section is for you and about you. Have fun in the KidzCorner!

Fun & Games

Can you find the hidden message? Find the words listed, then circle the unused letters in the puzzle to reveal an extra-special message! Who can tell us what it is?

E	C	N	Α	Т	S	Т	S	S	Α	W	0	С	Т	M
W	0	В	D	Ē	C	_	M		E	R	Н	Y	Ô	Α
1	_	_	_		_								•	
10	M	R	R	Ε	C	R	E	A	Т	Ι	0	N	G	E
U	M	Ε	Ε	S	N	0	W	F	L	Α	K	Ε	Ε	R
Α	U	N	Т	Ρ	R	Ε	Α	D	Ε	Т	Α	R	Т	D
N	N	Т	N	R	G	E	Т	N	С	R	L	D	Η	Α
E	I	Р	I	0	I	Н	U	R	Α	0	E	L	E	E
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s	Y	Α	D	I	L	0	Н	Y	Р	Ρ	Α	Н	N	Α
L	Α	С	V	R	Ρ	E	Ρ	N	R	U	N	С	Ė	Н
E	0	E	Y	Ε	Η	M	0	0	E	S	D	L	S	I
Т	I	G	D	M	A	0	Y	\mathbf{L}	Т	S	R	F	S	R
Т	0	M	0	A	Α	Н	M	D	Т	E	I	R	I	С
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R	Ε	S	Ι	R	Н	G	I	Н	В	Y	Т	I	N	U

ALEXANDRIA	I HAVE A DREAM						
AMERICORPS	LOGO						
ASSISTANCE	NEWSLETTER						
BETTER PLACE	RECREATION						
BRENT PLACE	RESIDENTS						
CHILDREN	REYNOLDS						
CHILDTHRIVE	SNOWFLAKE						
COMMUNITY	SUPPORT						
DECEMBER	TOGETHERNESS						
HAPPY HOLIDAYS	UNITY						
HIGHRISE	WINTER						
HOME							

Q. How do you scare a snowman?

A. You get a hairdryer!

Q. Who says "Oh, oh, oh"?

A. Santa walking backwards!

Can you find 10 things that are different in these 2 pictures?





THE BACK POCKET

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to share with you who we are, what we do, and why we do what we do. Hopefully, you've now learned a little about us; now we look forward to learning more about you and your needs as residents of Brent Place. You can usually find us in the Community Room between the fitness center and the stairwell, or you can call or leave a message for any one of us (see the list of phone numbers at the bottom of page 2). Either way, please feel free to speak openly with us about how we can work together to support and uplift the families of Brent Place.

In the short time we've been here, we've met so many great people from residents to management staff to community workers. We've canvassed doorto-door, assisted residents with resumes, played with alpacas, and served pizza and candy to kids dressed up for Halloween. Best of all, we've heard stories, recounted precious memories, laughed, and formed bonds, all in the two months we've been present in Brent Place

Going forward, we hope to lay lasting foundations within Brent Place that will inspire residents to be an even greater inspiration to their families and the community in which they live. Our goal is to work with the residents, the management staff, local organizations, and the surrounding community to empower, enrich, and engage the families of Brent Place. CR

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

Have an idea, feedback, contribution, or just want to see change? Speak up! We strongly value the opinions of residents and encourage you to speak up on how we can work together to make Brent Place a better place.